

2003 Report of Accomplishments

Whatcom Conservation District



Natural Resource Improvements in 2003 – Summary

- *Water quality screening data gathered to support the Lower Nooksack Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program has indicated dairy farmers' efforts to implement BMPs have contributed to an 80% reduction in fecal coliform counts in five watersheds in the Lower Nooksack River basin.*
- *Whatcom County's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program established 1,024 acres and 58.7 miles of new riparian buffer, thus improving fish and wildlife habitat throughout the county's lowlands.*
- *The re-opening of shellfish beds in Drayton Harbor and Portage Bay moved closer through documented reduction of agricultural sources of water pollution.*



Tenmile Creek channel restoration project with new meander

Mission of the Whatcom Conservation District

- *The Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) promotes conservation education and provides technical assistance to foster a healthy relationship between people and the environment.*

Water Quality Implementation

- *Worked with Whatcom County to establish an effective Farmland Protection Strategy, including a Purchase of Development Rights Program, to avoid negative impacts of conversion of prime farmland to urban uses.*
- *Leveraged WA Department of Agriculture funds to complete phases of a Comprehensive Irrigation District Management Plan for targeted watersheds in Whatcom County.*
- *Using the AWC Maintenance Guidelines Manual, provided technical assistance to drainage districts regarding re-establishment of riparian corridors. This resulted in a drainage improvement and restoration plan for Johnson Creek and in the District receiving approximately \$50,000 per year for four years (beginning in 2004) through a CCWF grant to Whatcom County.*

Basic Funding

- *Provided support and natural resource educational materials to 1250 sixth grade students through participation in the annual Whatcom County 6th Grade Forest Conservation Tour.*
- *Upgraded and maintained the District's Information Technology systems and website to offer the best possible service to our cooperators.*
- *Basic Funding allowed the District to pursue three other funding opportunities. The District was successful in obtaining a \$500,000 State Revolving Loan Fund award to assist cooperators in constructing methane digester facilities.*

Local Funding

- *WCD does not receive funding from Whatcom County or local cities, nor do we have an assessment.*

Puget Sound/Water Quality

- *Partnered with the Horses for Clean Water program to coordinate two series of small farm management workshops focusing on environmentally sensitive livestock keeping practices. Seventy-five local horse and livestock owners attended the classes.*
- *Led eight watershed education classes and two water quality field days for various local schools. Over three hundred elementary and high school students benefited from field experience collecting macroinvertebrate samples and water quality data.*

Professional Engineering

- *Designed, managed, and supervised construction of 500 feet of new tributary, replacing a canary grass clogged ditch into which the Tenmile Creek had historically been diverted.*
- *Managed a stream habitat restoration project on private property that consisted of removing concrete fill from the channel of Tenmile Creek and replacing it with a fully spanning bridge.*
- *Completed a topographic and cross section survey of approximately one mile of Tenmile Creek.*
- *Provided survey and technical assistance to Lummi log jam project on the South Fork Nooksack.*

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- Completed 35 new riparian planting projects in the past year with over 30 future projects planned.
- As of June 2003, eighty CREP projects had been completed including 1,024 acres and 58.7 miles of riparian buffer.
- Hosted NPR Radio Station KPLU on tour of a Whatcom County CREP project to highlight restoration efforts of a local dairy producer.

Dairy

- Six new Dairy Nutrient Management Plans were developed and reviewed in addition to review and update of other plans as warranted by changes in producers' animal numbers and land base. Through June 30, 2003 fifty-seven DNMPs had been certified.
- In the past year WCD's Dairy Team and NRCS personnel provided technical assistance and support for the installation of: 7 manure transfer systems, 3 waste storage structures, 11 waste distribution pipelines (43,785 ft.), 1 underground outlet, 1 access road, 2 subsurface drains, 2,476 acres of relay cover crops for 19 producers, and reviewed soil tests and nutrient management records from 96 dairy producers covering 17,636 acres. A total of 54,000 acres in Whatcom County have farm plans including 2200 acres of filter strips and riparian forest buffers.

Irrigation Efficiencies

- Informed local cooperators about the program. No current participation in the program.

Watershed Conservation/Habitat Restoration

- Worked as part of the Nooksack Recovery Team (NRT), a group dedicated to restoration of fish habitat in the Nooksack watershed. District GIS support updated the NRT Project Map to show the over 600 projects completed by NRT members.
- Encouraged cross-border watershed cooperation by hosting a meeting and tour of Bertrand and Fishtrap Creek watersheds to facilitate information exchange between U.S. and Canadian sides of the watersheds. The meeting included twelve resource professionals and watershed residents.
- Created a Bertrand Creek watershed map illustrating salmonid habitat limiting factors in support of a 2002 Bertrand Creek Salmonid Habitat Assessment.

Small Farm Programs

- Developed conservation plans (CPs) incorporating BMPs (composting systems, fencing, use exclusions, nutrient management, filter strips, pasture management, etc.) to protect water quality for 15 small livestock operations. Acreage included in CPs during the past year amounted to 195 acres for farms ranging in size from 2.2 acres to 63 acres.
- Provided substantial technical assistance to over 70 small farm operators through phone consultations, site visits, and provision of written information.

Community Collaboration & Coordination

- Administered the CCWF Tenmile Watershed Pilot Project grant, a sub-watershed based project to educate local residents and to restore and maintain at least 12,000 linear feet of riparian habitat.
- Chaired the Salmon Habitat Restoration Citizen's Advisory Committee and contracted with Whatcom County to provide administrative support to Lead Entity staff throughout the 4th Round Salmon Recovery Funding Board Grant process.

Information & Education

- For the District's 10th Annual Plant Sale, processed 309 orders for over 22,000 trees and shrubs.
- Led watershed education and restoration efforts in Bertrand and Fishtrap Creek watersheds, including three community planting parties, a hatchery tour, and a Stream Team class series.
- Maintained communication with local cooperators through newsletter publication: three issues of Whatcom Conservation News (distribution list of 5000+ countywide), two issues of Stream Team News (distribution list of 500+ to Bertrand and Fishtrap Creek watershed residents), and four issues of In Balance (distribution list of 300+ local dairy industry recipients).

Washington Conservation Districts assisting land managers with their conservation choices

